



Real Science ... Fiction

It was a quiet afternoon. I was in my home-office busily penning the masterpiece that was to become my first novel when a bizarre, pulsating noise began emanating from the computer speakers. It buzzed in a strange symphony for a few moments, faded, and was gone.

My mind immediately became engaged in rampant speculation. The fact that I lived near a large military base weighed in and possibilities swirled as to what covert operation or top secret data burst I had unintentionally intercepted. But then common sense and years of communications engineering experience weighed in.

When that raspy buzz returned about a week later, I opened the blinds to see a natural gas company truck, bristling with antennas, slowly driving by. The sound was nothing more than circuitry in my computer speakers partially demodulating an active data acquisition transmission used to gather usage information from gas meters equipped with digital radio frequency technology.

Science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke said: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." The statement implies that when our ability or desire to comprehend science goes beyond what we believe to be possible, we limit ourselves by our beliefs, and not necessarily technology. If you think about it, it's often only a lack of knowledge or understanding that makes one man's science another's science fiction.

Did you know that during World War II, the Japanese military made "balloon bombs" designed to travel the jet streams across the Pacific to drop on the United States? A few actually made it. The Japanese were also working on a giant high radio frequency "ray gun" intended to immobilize attacking troops en masse. As well, the Germans were working on a host of their own strange weapons, including a giant air cannon intended to blow the wings off of overflying aircraft.

A wild American idea that lost out to the Manhattan Project was the "Bat Bomb." Thousands of bats were fitted with small incendiary devices and loaded onto trays in a layered "bomb" to be dropped over Japanese cities. Theoretically, the trays would deploy and the bats would disperse, landing and roosting in the mostly wooden Japanese structures where the incendiaries would ignite and burn, in turn setting the cities ablaze. The weapon was built and tested, but never deployed.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union was a candy store for supposed "fringe science." Reports of psychic warfare involving experiments with mind control, telekinetics, and remote-viewing espionage (the ability to psychically "see" the physical environment of a distant location) were public knowledge, or hyperbole. In the '70s, a Nikola Tesla-like glowing "energy dome" was supposedly seen over Siberia by a commercial airline pilot. A reconnaissance photo published in 1980 showed a facility speculated to be their government's attempt at a massive particle beam weapon. Soviet agents were once caught beaming microwave signals into the American Embassy. Some say it was surveillance. Others say it was an ongoing mind-control experiment. What is real?

I wasn't quite a teenager in the mid-70s when the infamous Russian Duga series over-the-horizon radar system

suddenly filled the world's airwaves and the speakers of my modest Electrophonic stereo with its sharp, pulsing, 10 cycles per second "TAP TAP TAP." Designed to detect the plumes of long-range ballistic missile launches over the lands of its enemies, the signal wreaked havoc with communications and electronic systems throughout North America where a primary signal path had been directed from over the North Pole. Conspiracy theorists went berserk. But it was the world's Amateur Radio operators who quickly pulled out their oscilloscopes and radio direction finding equipment to evaluate the signal, find its origin, and posit as to its likely and logical intent.

Chris Carter's TV series, *The X-Files*, coined a phrase equally prophetic to conspiracy theorists, scientists, and Tibetan monks: "The truth is out there."

There are those, possibly a few reading CROSSTALK right now, who are privy to real science and technology so advanced that for many it would undoubtedly seem like science fiction—or magic. Even the ideas of particle beam weapons and "death rays" have now evolved into ground- and aircraft-based chemical lasers and microwave-based crowd deterrents. Technology, creativity, and ambition soldier on.

So what else is "out there"?

Now that I think about it, I can't be sure that really *was* a company gas truck. Did some covert agency find out about those strange scalar weaponry documents that mysteriously showed up a few years ago?

What could really be going on inside all those new digital televisions and converter boxes that we "have to get"? Can the microphone and camera in my cell phone really be activated without my knowledge? Is the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) really producing antimatter? Could the mass energy in a fountain pen actually supply enough power to run a city for a day? The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency? The Aurora Project? Dark matter? The High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program? Wormholes?

And just how do you suppose Nikola Tesla's scientific papers managed to become "lost" anyway?

Isn't paranoia—I mean science and imagination—wonderful?

—Ranse Parker

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